

BEL CANTO

Newsletter of the Manatee Opera Guild

September 2025

<https://manateeoperaguild.org>

MEMBERSHIP MEETING SEPTEMBER 17, 2025 PALM AIRE COUNTRY CLUB

Coffee and Conversation at 10 a.m.

Business Meeting at 10:30 a.m.

Speaker at 11 a.m.

Martha Collins

Followed by an optional luncheon.

September Luncheon Menu:

Chicken All'Italiana (Topped With Spinach, Ricotta and Parmesan), Rosemary Potatoes, Roasted Vegetable Medley

Vegetarian: Pasta Primavera (Linguine with Garlic and Olive Oil and Assorted Grilled Vegetables)

Dessert : Raspberry Trifle

Reservations To: Barbara Quinn, 3205 Wilderness Blvd. W., Bradenton, Fl. 34219, Telephone: 941-776-0038, Email: Barbquinn@Aol.Com

Reservations are due by September 12, 2025

Checks made out to: Manatee Opera Guild (MOG)

Luncheon is \$35 per person. Please indicate your choice of entrée when making your reservation.

Greetings and welcome to the new Manatee Opera Guild year!

As your recently elected president, I am having that “back to school” feeling that I used to experience as a child – looking forward to the coming year, but a bit nervous about some aspects of my new role. None of us should worry, though, since we have a terrific board with a great mix of returning members and new faces on the leadership team. Happily, our special events are already scheduled, and we can mark our calendars now so that nothing conflicts with the MOG occasions that will provide a world of fun while raising funds for Sarasota Opera.

Be sure to incorporate these important dates in your planning for the remainder of 2025 and early 2026.

- *On-Stage Concert* – It’s official, the theme is French, the food...well, it’s French, so what needs to be said? And the music that is planned will be superb. Mark your schedule for Wednesday, November 12th, from 5 to 8 p.m. To sponsor, contact Syble DiGirolomo.
- *Stars of Tomorrow Concert* – We’re all set, thanks to Valerie Giuliani, for the concert that will take place at the State College of Florida’s Neel Performing Arts Center on Sunday, February 8th, at 1:00 p.m. It’s not too early to start talking up this MOG event with your neighbors, colleagues, and friends. Let’s start early and sell enough tickets to fill the hall!
- *MOG Fashion Show* – Thursday, February 26th, at 11:30 is the “when,” and Lakewood Ranch Country Club is the “where.” Most important is the “who” – you and all your friends - who will attend this signature event of the Guild. More details will be coming soon, but be sure to schedule this one before your calendar fills up.

With three very special MOG events, eight monthly membership meetings, five upcoming Preludes, Fall and Winter Opera Festivals – along with the celebration of the centennial of the Opera House – we can do a lot of good, have a lot of fun, and keep ourselves out of trouble!

See you at the first membership meeting at Palm Aire on September 17th!

Elizabeth Aversa

Unsung but Sung: The Role of Opera Librettists

Elizabeth Aversa

Opera wouldn't be opera without a good story set down in words that can be beautifully sung. In fact, the story is significant enough that a recent survey found that it is most often the *story* that drives us to attend an opera performance. This alone would argue for equal billing with the composer for the unsung hero or heroine: the librettist.

The job of the librettist, in the words of contemporary lyricist Mark Campbell is "to tell a story through music." He adds, "My second job is to see that the composer has all that he or she needs to tell that story ... My words must inspire the composer."

Jeanine Tsoni (composer of *Blue*, with librettist Tazewell Thompson, and *Grounded* with George Brant) advocates that composer and librettist should receive equal billing. Whenever she mentions her works she gives credit to her librettists.

We know from correspondence, archival materials, and secondary sources that librettists of the past played many roles. Most often they were poets or other writers who condensed novels, plays, poems, and other stories, into poetic texts that could be put to music. It is no small task to condense a dramatic work like *Othello* into a performable work with beauty and economy of language, a length tolerable by the audience, and loyalty to the original work. But at the same time, librettists also served the composers in many other ways – negotiating with censors, working with impresarios, tweaking the material to suit specific singers, and navigating the creative process with brilliant, passionate composers. The best collaborations are like artistic miracles!

So who were some of the most notable librettists from the perspective of opera-goers? Here are six names that might constitute the beginning for a librettists' hall of fame and some of our favorite composers with whom they worked:

- Pietro Metastasio, 1698-1782 (Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Pergolesi & Salieri)
- Lorenzo Da Ponte, 1749-1838 (Mozart)
- Felice Romani, 1788-1865 (Donizetti & Bellini)
- Arrigo Boito, 1842-1918 & Francesco Maria Piave, 1810-1876 (Verdi)
- Luigi Illica, 1857-1919 (Puccini & Giordano)
- Sir William Schwanck Gilbert (1836-1911) (Sullivan)

Although those of us who aren't fluent in the language of the librettist's work may not fully appreciate the poetry, we can appreciate the music, the story, and the flow of the words that are sung.

Here are a few examples:

- Lorenzo Da Ponte wrote the libretto for an opera that we'll hear this fall in Sarasota. *Così fan tutte*, composed by Mozart, includes a beautiful trio 'Soave sia il vento' ('May the wind be gentle') in which two women, believing their lovers are leaving for military service, wish them smooth sailing. The third person in the trio, Don Alfonso, is not on the women's side; he has orchestrated a bet that they will be unfaithful in their lovers' absences for fictional military service. Click to hear <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2ESkanjf5s>
- Felice Romani penned the libretto for Bellini's *Norma*. Known for his ability to write poetry both dramatic and brief, Romani wrote both tragic and comic works. Here is a duet from *Norma* featuring Renata Scottò and Mirella Freni. In this number Adalgisa and Norma reflect on what they will do regarding Norma's children and Pollione. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGdWDxTY89M>
- It is said that Arrigo Boito was "one of the very few great librettists, his best work being done for Verdi," and that "the libretto for *Falstaff* is sometimes regarded as the finest which any composer has been given." Here is a comic scene where Alice and Meg discover that Sir John Falstaff has made the same overture to both women, and they, and their comrades, begin to plot revenge. Listen here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amJp_LowcM0
- A 28-minute video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2uKRPrEyZQ> will entertain and inform you about Gilbert and Sullivan. Known for their seemingly zany, though politically critical works, Gilbert's words and Sullivan's music are staples of operetta. Here is the major general's song from *The Pirates of Penzance*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rs3dPaz9nAo>

The lives and careers of librettists are interesting in their own rights, and works such as *The Librettist of Venice: The Remarkable Life of Lorenzo Da Ponte* by Rodney Bolt (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006) and David Kirkpatrick's thesis *The Role of Metastasio's Libretti in the Eighteenth Century...* (Florida State University, 2009) provide both background and insight.

So next time you listen to an opera, remember how the story got into the form that you hear, and salute the unsung hero in the making of the opera!



Annual Membership Application

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City, State and Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

New Member ☐ Renewing Member ☐

I (we) can help the Manatee Opera Guild in these ways (please check all appropriate boxes)

Literature design ☐

Event planning ☐

Fundraising ☐

Greeting ☐

Developing membership ☐

Photography ☐

Writing ☐

Hosting parties ☐

Hospitality ☐

Publicity ☐

Refreshments ☐

Serving on the Board ☐

Soliciting advertising and gifts ☐

Telephoning ☐

Editing (newsletters, brochures, letters) ☐

Setting up/cleaning up ☐

Modeling at fashion show ☐

Other talent ☐

Membership Level:

☐ Single Regular Membership \$40

☐ Single Sustaining Membership \$50

☐ Couple Regular Membership \$60

☐ Couple Sustaining Membership \$70

Send application and payment to:

Make checks payable to **Manatee Opera Guild or
MOG**

Send application and payment to:

Babs Noah 4635 Runabout Way Bradenton, FL 34203

2025/26 Manatee Opera Guild Calendar

August 29, 2025

September 2025	October 2025	November 2025	December 2025
<p>Tuesday, Sept. 9, 2025, Board Meeting, Aversa Home, 10 a.m.</p> <p>Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2025 Membership Meeting, Palm Aire CC, 10 a.m.</p>	<p>Tuesday, Oct. 7, 2025, Board Meeting, TBD, 10 a.m.</p> <p>Wednesday, October 15, 2025 Membership Meeting, Palm Aire CC, 10 a.m.</p> <p>Friday, October 17, 2025, 10 Prelude, 10 a.m. Westminster Manor – Così fan tutte, E. Aversa</p>	<p>Tuesday, November 11, 2025, Board Meeting, TBD, 10 a.m.</p> <p>Wednesday, November 12, 2025, On-Stage Concert, Sarasota Opera House, 5:30 – 8 p.m.</p> <p>Wednesday, November 19, 2025 Membership Meeting, Palm Aire CC, 10 a.m.</p> <p>Friday, November 21, 2025, Prelude, 10 a.m., Westminster Manor, La Bohème, S. Sundine</p>	<p>Tuesday, December 2, 2025, Board Meeting, TBD, 10 a.m.</p> <p>Sunday, December 7, 2025, Holiday Party, Hazen Residence, 3 p.m.</p> <p>Monday, December 8, 2025, Membership Meeting/Picnic, Sarasota Opera House Courtyard, 10 a.m.</p> <p>Friday, December 12, 2025 Prelude, 10 a.m., Westminster Manor, The Merry Widow, R. Martorella</p>

January 2026	February 2026	March 2026	April 2026
<p>Tuesday, January 6, 2026, Opera Movie Special, Westminster Manor, 1:30 p.m.</p> <p>Wednesday, January 14, 2026, Board Meeting, TBD, 10 a.m.</p> <p>Wednesday, January 21, 2026, Membership Meeting, Palm Aire CC, 10 a.m.</p> <p>Friday, January 23, 2026, Prelude, 10 a.m., Westminster Manor, Susannah, M. Collins</p>	<p>Sunday, February 8, 2026, Stars of Tomorrow Concert, Neel Auditorium SCF, 1 p.m.</p> <p>Tuesday, February 10, 2026, Board Meeting, TBD, 10 a.m.</p> <p>Wednesday, February 18, 2026, Membership Meeting, Palm Aire CC, 10 a.m. Sweetheart Luncheon</p> <p>Friday, February 20, 2026, Prelude, 10 a.m., Westminster Manor, Il Trovatore, R. Russell</p> <p>Thursday, February 26, 2026, Fashion Show, 11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m., Lakewood Ranch CC</p>	<p>Tuesday, March 10, 2026, Board Meeting, TBD, 10 a.m.</p> <p>Wednesday, March 18, 2026, Membership Meeting, Palm Aire CC, 10 a.m. HJD and Youth Opera Award Luncheon</p>	<p>Tuesday, April 7, 2026, Board Meeting, TBD, 10 a.m.</p> <p>Wednesday, April 15, 2026 Membership Meeting, Palm Aire CC, 10 a.m. Welcome New Members Luncheon</p>